

CLAIMS

- 5 1. A process for manufacturing larger leaf black tea comprising the steps of withering and macerating tea leaves, allowing them to ferment, firing the leaves to arrest fermentation and then drying and sorting them to yield black leaf tea,
- 10 the process being characterised in that the tea leaves are withered to a moisture content of between 64% and 70% before being macerated by the controlled application of both shear and compression forces sufficient to disrupt the majority of cells within the tea leaf, to introduce morphological changes in the
- 15 tissue and to redistribute the cell contents, all of which leads to fermentation and infusion typical of CTC teas, whilst maintaining the appearance of orthodox tea.
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the tea leaves are
- 20 withered to a moisture content of between 64 and 68%
3. A process according to claim 1 wherein the withered tea leaves are macerated by being passed through a modified rotorvane machine.
- 25 4. A process according to claim 3 wherein the dried black leaf tea is sorted to select black leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade or larger
- 30 5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the withered leaves are macerated by being passed through a rotorvane machine in which at least some of the vanes have been replaced by reverse facing vanes.
- 35 6. A process according to claim 4 wherein the dried black leaf tea is sorted to select black leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade or larger

7. A process according to claim 3 wherein the tea leaves leaving the rotorvane are further cut, diced or chopped.
- 5 8. A process according to claim 7 wherein the tea leaves leaving the rotorvane are further cut by being passed through a CTC machine.
9. A process according to claim 8 wherein the blade of the CTC  
10 machine has 2 to 6 teeth per inch.
10. A process according to claim 7 wherein the dried black leaf tea is sorted to select black leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade and/or Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings grade.
- 15 11. A process according to claim 8 wherein the dried black leaf tea is sorted to select black leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade and/or Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings grade.
- 20 12. A process according to claim 9 wherein the dried black leaf tea is sorted to select black leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade and/or Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings grade.
13. A process according to claim 7 wherein the tea leaves  
25 leaving the rotorvane are further diced or chopped by being passed through a two dimensional belt-fed dicer with circular knives or a food processor with rotary micro-cut heads
14. A process according to claim 1 wherein the withered leaves  
30 are macerated by being passed through an extruder machine.
15. A black leaf tea having an orthodox appearance obtainable by a process that comprises the steps of withering tea leaves to a moisture content of between 64% and 70%, macerating the leaves  
35 by the controlled application of both shear and compression forces sufficient to disrupt the majority of cells within the tea leaf, to introduce morphological changes in the tissue and

to redistribute the cell contents, all of which leads to fermentation and infusion typical of CTC teas, whilst maintaining the appearance of orthodox tea

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16.A black leaf tea having the appearance of orthodox leaf tea of Broken Orange Pekoe grade or larger which when infused in boiling water for 3 minutes at a concentration of 10g/l provides an infusion that has an a\* value of at least 14 and a b\* value of at least 88.

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